

Neighbors Say Garage E.I.R. Inadequate

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Cliff House Undergoes Historic Renovation

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Planting Seeds



Photo: Philip Liborio Gangi

Greg Gaar helped develop a native plant garden at the HANC recycling center.

Native plants flourishing at recycling center

The Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council Recycling Center (HANC), located at Frederick Street and Arguello Boulevard on the southern boundary of Golden Gate Park, has completed an extensive expansion of its native plant garden. The garden now beautifies the recycling center's entire perimeter. The center is also propagating and nurturing tens of thousands of native plants, which are now available to the public.

The recycling center has been at the forefront of numerous environmental activities. HANC was formed in 1959 when Sue Bierman, Dianne Feinstein and numerous residents saved the east side of Mt. Sutro from a planned apartment complex. HANC and other groups successfully stopped the approved Panhandle Freeway in 1967.

When there was nowhere to recycle, HANC started the recycling center in 1976. Today, there is a big demand for local, site-specific native plants and HANC is growing them.

Most of the plants in the garden and those being propagated are indigenous to San Francisco. Native plants are the foundation of the Earth's ecosystems and supply food and habitat for all the native wildlife. Since native plants have been here for thousands of years, they are highly adapted to local environmental

conditions and extremely drought tolerant, making them the highest form of sustainable landscaping.

The Golden Gate Park Master Plan promotes the use of "sustainable and drought tolerant landscaping" and the creation of "wildlife habitat." Native plant gardens are ideal for the implementation of those goals.

Some of the natives being raised at the recycling center include: San Francisco Wallflower (Lake Merced), San Francisco Gum Plant (Twin Peaks), Golden Rod (Golden Gate Heights), Beach Sagewort (Hawk Hill), California Aster (Mt. Davidson and Twin Peaks), Nutka Reed Grass (Mt. Davidson), Crimson Columbine (Glen Canyon), Bee Plant (Laguna Honda Canyon), Yerba Buena (Twin Peaks), Blue-eyed Grass, Giant Buckwheat, Coast Buckwheat, Yarrow, Coyote Bush, Bush Monkey Flower and more.

HANC is supplying some of the plants for habitat restoration at Tank Hill, Twin Peaks and Brooks Park, as well as the Pioneer Park Project and Green Schoolyards.

The recycling center is open every day, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tours for school groups can be arranged. For more information, call Greg Gaar at 752-5983.

Neighbors have problems with V.A. research center

by Carol Dimmick

Once again politics is about to become a contact sport in San Francisco as Richmond neighbors, angry over what they say is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) willingness to ignore public process requirements, will soon present the VA with a list of demands.

Fueling the acrimony is a 200,000-square-foot research center the VA is planning to build on its Fort Miley site at Clement Street and 42nd Avenue. The new facility will sit on a three-acre parcel of land that is currently a parking lot.

Neighbors contend the VA is going ahead with the project even though critical studies, which they say the VA has side-stepped for years, are not complete.

Ron Miguel, president of the Planning Association for the Richmond (PAR), an influential watchdog organization made up of 1,600 households in the Richmond District, says the VA has turned a blind eye to community concerns for years while

developing the site.

"We have no institutional master plan even though PAR has requested this for years. We have requested a parking and traffic study and we don't have it. You are putting the cart before the horse on this one," Miguel said at a Jan. 8 community meeting sponsored by the VA to discuss the new research center.

Miguel is busy putting the final touches on a list of demands the community believes the VA must agree to implement before they go ahead with the project, including the removal of a majority of the temporary buildings that have been at the site for decades. The demands include:

- Develop a comprehensive five-year master plan for the site;
- Agree to preserve historic buildings and landscaping identified in a preservation study currently underway;
- Take a pro-active position on parking and transportation issues plaguing the community;
- Limit the size of the new research facility to what is stan-

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Programs, staff on Rec. and Park's chopping block

by Carol Dimmick

Up against an \$11 million budget shortfall, officials at the SF Recreation and Park Department are asking Richmond and Sunset district residents to help them make tough budget decisions that could mean closing facilities and cutting staff positions.

It was just three years ago that a \$200 million budget surplus sent Mayor Willie Brown on a spending spree, handing out pay raises and hiring more city workers. Now, the mayor, faced with a \$350 million budget shortfall, is asking all departments to take a hit of almost one-third of the total amount they receive from the city's General Fund.

To meet Brown's request to trim \$10.9 million from the \$35 million it receives from the City, the SF Recreation and Park Department will consider everything — from selling naming rights at Candlestick Park to the highest bidder to using \$1 million in Open Space Funds — to help close the deficit and pay for 17 staff positions.

During the past few months

the department has been quietly working behind the scenes on the budget shortfall. It recently received approval from the SF Recreation and Park Commission to increase fees on everything from permits to parking.

The commissioners also approved increasing fees the department charges for classes at the Sharon Art Studio. The changes are estimated to bring in an additional \$500,000.

The department will soon bring proposals before the commission to acquire an additional \$900,000 from the Downtown Park Fund for services provided for Union Square improvements and \$100,000 by increasing reimbursements for outings.

In addition, the department is also exploring ways to lower its expenses by proposing that employees voluntarily take unpaid leave (\$200,000), cuts in recreation staff (\$275,000), reducing programs and reducing staff at the Housing Authority.

To decide what and how much to cut, the department is holding a series of community meetings in early February to get

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Golden Gate Park garage EIR flawed, neighbors say

by Carol Dimmick

In January dozens of Sunset and Richmond district residents told the S.F. Planning Commission that the Environment Impact Report (EIR) for a controversial plan to build a parking garage beneath the Music Concourse in Golden Gate Park is deeply flawed and ignores problems that will negatively impact their neighborhoods.

The \$500 million, 800-space facility has been the center of controversy since 1998 when voters passed Proposition J which approved building a garage and authorized other transportation improvements in the park.

Because of concerns that the garage would tear up the Music Concourse, the area located in front of the Bandshell, it was designed in two sections that will be connected by an underground roadway. One section of the garage will be built under the roadway in front of the California Academy of Sciences on the south side of the concourse and the other under the roadway in front of the new M.H. de Young Memorial Museum on the north side.

The garage will have two entrances, one at Fulton Street and 10th Avenue in the Richmond District and one on Music Concourse Drive near Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Since the passage of Prop. J in 1998, the garage has become a focal point for residents who flocked to a Jan. 23 meeting of

the SF Planning Commission to express their frustration — they say the EIR ignores the impact the garage will have on parking and safety issues in their neighborhoods.

Stephen Abrams, a traffic consultant hired by the North Park Neighbors Association to study the EIR, told commissioners that the neighbors have legitimate concerns and that more traffic studies are needed.

"This (EIR) is a simplistic review. It says there will be no significant impacts on Fulton Street, but if you are removing 1,300 parking spaces from the park it impacts the surrounding neighborhood. Mitigation measures are not included in the EIR that address the parking issue," Abrams said.

Sunset residents who live near the proposed Ninth Avenue entrance to the garage told commissioners that parking and traffic gridlock will occur in their neighborhood as a result of the plan. They also urged commissioners not to approve the EIR for the garage until more traffic studies are completed.

Lisa Orsaba, a business owner in the Inner Sunset, said the EIR failed to include traffic studies along critical business corridors on the south side of the park.

"Only one study was done — of Lincoln Avenue," she said. The Ninth and Irving intersection is critical. We will continue to object to the EIR until sufficient traffic studies are included."

John Rizzo, a commissioner at the Golden Gate Park Concourse

Authority, the body responsible for overseeing the design and construction of the facility, agreed that more traffic studies concerning the south side of the garage are needed.

"There needs to be language (in the EIR) about the south side of the park. The Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way side needs to be treated more equally," he said.

Rizzo also criticized the EIR for not including an alternative plan for the garage.

Still others said the EIR failed to adequately consider a broader range of issues.

Marianne Miller, a Sunset resident and member of the Alliance for Golden Gate Park, an organization formed to fight the garage, said the EIR is flawed because it fails to take a comprehensive approach to analyzing the impact the garage and other new projects, like the new de Young Museum, will have on the Music Concourse.

"Nowhere are there cumulative impacts. S.E.Q.U.A. requires it. The document is fallacious and it should be sent back for more work," Miller said.

Despite the neighbors' concerns, Jill Wynns, president of S.F. Board of Education and a member of Keep the de Young in the Park, urged the commissioners to move the project forward quickly and reminded them that the garage was the key to keeping the de Young Museum and the California Academy of Sciences in the park.

Several employees of the Academy of Sciences expressed concern that the plan fails to provide access to the facility for vehicles traveling through the Music Concourse.

"We need access for busses and vehicles to bring school children," said Martha Crop, chairman of the board of directors at the Academy of Sciences.

The Planning Commission meets in a couple of months to consider whether or not to certify the garage EIR. At that same meeting commissioners will determine whether the design of the garage is consistent with the city's General Plan.



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And food to go

New food pantry to open

A new food pantry to serve hungry residents in the Richmond District is opening on Geary Boulevard.

The food pantry is sponsored by the Congregation Emanu-El as part of its "mitzvah," or good deed campaign.

On Sunday, Feb. 2, the pantry will host an opening party with ribbon cutting ceremony at 12:30 p.m. Participants will receive training to provide assistance at the pantry, located at 3821 Geary Blvd., between Second and Third avenues, on subsequent Sundays.

Congregation Emanu-El is the first local synagogue to open a pantry as part of the SF Food Bank Neighborhood Grocery

Network. The program provides low-cost food from the SF Food Bank to community organizations, which distribute it for free.

"The pantry allows our students and volunteers to make a tangible connection to what is needed in our neighborhood," said Rabbi Sydney Mintz.

Groceries at the Geary Boulevard pantry will be distributed on Sundays. For more information about the pantry, call Colleen Prince at 387-6700.

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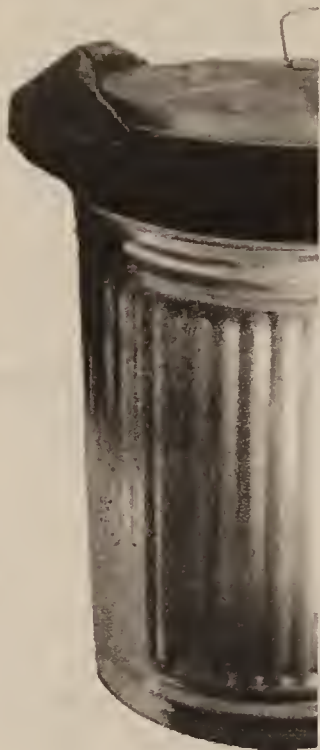
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Gung Hay Fat Choy Merchants warned to be on the lookout for extortionists

With the kick-off of the "Year of the Ram," the lunar new year, police and safety advocates are warning about the possibility of extortion from gang associates and urging merchants to report suspicious activity.

Police brass and community leaders held a press conference at the Sheng Kee Bakery on Irving Street Jan. 23 before taking to the streets to personally inform Richmond and Sunset district merchants of the increased threat. Attending the extortion-prevention event were Supervisor Fiona Ma, Police Chief Earl Sanders, Richmond Station Capt. Sandra Tong, Taraval Station acting-captain Larry Barsetti and representatives of Safety Awareness for Everyone (SAFE) and SF Neighborhood Safety Partnership.

"I'm pleased to see everyone in the community working together to combat crime," Ma said.

During the lunar new year gang members often drop off plants as a sign of good luck. They then return later to get money for the plants.

If merchants refuse to pay the gang members, bad luck often befalls them, as was the case two years ago when two Richmond District restaurants were mysteriously firebombed. Police are close to prosecuting several suspects in the cases.

Last year, there were three cases of extortion and two attempted extortions of Asian merchants.

To report an extortion attempt or suspicious activity, call the Taraval Station's tip line at 759-3120 or the Richmond Station's tip line at 666-8090.

People born in the Year of the Ram (year 4701) are said to be gentle, creative, elegant and do not like to be bound by restrictions; they prefer to use natural solutions in their quest for freedom. The upcoming year is an opportunity for achievements, resolutions and to extend and strengthen diplomatic relations.

This year's two-week lunar new year celebration culminates with a large parade in Chinatown on Saturday, Feb. 15, at 5:30 p.m. The Chinese New Year parade ends with a performance by the Golden Dragon.



Community college cutbacks

Governor Gray Davis has announced a new budget proposal that includes \$217 million in reductions for the state's community colleges. The SF Community College system stands to lose \$13 million in funding over the next 18 months.

The budget cuts mean the current tuition fee for SF Community College courses, \$11 per unit, will change to \$24 per unit — a 118 percent increase.

The impact on faculty, staff and stu-

dents at the Community Colleges of San Francisco over the next 18 months include: the loss of 30 full-time and 250 part-time faculty positions; increased class sizes; a loss of 1,000 classes and a 50 percent reduction in summer session classes, a significant reduction in student support services; and a reduction in library hours.

The governor's budget expects a loss of 96,000 full-time equivalent students statewide in the community college system.



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The San Francisco Police Commission will be holding its regularly scheduled meeting in the Richmond District on Wednesday, Feb. 26, at the Community Meeting Room at the Richmond Station, 461 Sixth Ave., at 6 p.m. Please come and meet police commissioners and command staff and get an update on the local crime scene. I will make a presentation to the commission and there will be several citizen commendations. Our regular community meeting scheduled for Feb. 25 will not be held because of the special Police Commission meeting.

Police Beat

Capt. Sandra Tong



on both vehicles.

The suspect stated he and an unnamed friend were shooting his pellet rifle atop of Strawberry Hill. When they saw police officers approaching, they

hid the rifle and fled. Because there was reasonable suspicion that both men were engaging in a crime when they fled officers and refused a police officer's demand to halt, the man was arrested. The man was also charged with an additional infraction – wading in a park lake.

Goodbye Jim

On Jan. 8 we said goodbye to officer Jim Strange, the "beat" officer for Geary Boulevard. Jim and his wife Maryann were in the old S.F. Police Department limousine touring the district that day – and now you know why.

Strange retired after 32 years of service with the S.F. Police Department. He worked at the Central, Southern, Ingleside and Mission stations and the Tenderloin Task Force before finishing his career at the Richmond Station. Station personnel and the residents and business owners in the Richmond District know him as a fine and diligent officer who will be missed.

Good luck Jim.

Would You Believe?

Never leave anything in plain view in your vehicle. It is an open invitation for a burglar.

Things that have been stolen from vehicles include cell phones, gym bags, handbags, coats, brief cases and – believe it or not – fresh baked cinnamon rolls.

Capt. Sandra Tong is the commanding officer at the Richmond Station.

Gate Park) because of a report of two males with a rifle and a report of "shots fired."

The two bridges to the island were immediately blocked off and when officers approached the top of the hill, the two young men started running away from them. The two men jumped into the lake, without the weapon, and escaped. A search for the suspects was to no avail.

During the course of the investigation, a citizen provided police with information about a vehicle possibly belonging to the two men. At the direction of acting Lt. Jerry Ishida, officer Mooney conducted a surveillance of the parked vehicle.

Approximately three hours later, Mooney observed two white males drive up to the suspect vehicle and a traffic stop was made

Were You Wondering What Was Going On at Stow Lake?

Officers Steve Mooney, Rosemarie Castro, David Burns, Kathryn Waaland, David Nakasu, Gary Mendribil, Bobby Cheung and Sgt. Tom Lee all arrived at Strawberry Hill (the island in the middle of Stow Lake in Golden

POLICE BLOTTER

Aggravated Assault with Force: Jan. 1, 3:15 a.m., Clement Street and 32nd Avenue

A witness noticed four men beating and dragging a drunk man. He yelled out for the men to stop and called police.

Officers arrived at the scene and found the man lying face-down in a prone position. He had bruises and welts on his face and arms and was acting very intoxicated.

The victim refused medical treatment and refused to cooperate with police or paramedics who responded to the scene.

The witness said the four suspects, who were in their late teens or early 20s, were kicking the victim and dragging him down the street. When they started dragging him into a secluded doorway, the witness called out and the suspects fled.

The 23-year-old victim was transported to General Hospital for surveillance. A search of the area was to no avail.

Petty Theft with Prior Conviction: Jan. 8, 4:45 p.m., 5400 Block of Geary Boulevard

A shoplifter was observed by store employees as he put two bottles of perfume and six pairs of flannel boxer shorts into two shopping bags he was carrying. He then exited the store without paying.

An employee followed the 36-year-old suspect outside, grabbed one of the bags and told the suspect he was a store employee and to come back inside the store. The suspect dropped the second shopping bag and fled on foot.

The store employee hopped in a squad car and a search ensued. "That's him," the employee said as the police cruiser turned onto 22nd Avenue.

The suspect was booked on a citizen's arrest. A records check revealed numerous arrests for and convictions for petty theft.

Malicious Mischief, Resisting a Peace Officer: Jan. 10, 11:25 p.m., 2800 Block of Geary Boulevard

The suspect was drinking in a local bar when he missed his turn shooting pool. Because he was intoxicated, the man challenged anyone in the bar to a fight before exiting.

Outside the bar the man started arguing with several people. The suspect was arrested and booked.

Commercial Robbery with Force: Dec. 29, 2002, 9:30 a.m., 800 Block of La Playa

The suspect walked into a store and proceeded to put 15 containers of baby formula into a box before leaving the store without paying.

A store employee noticed the

Continued on page 8

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This has been an active month, with several changes at the SF Board of Supervisors since Matt Gonzalez was elected the new president of the board in January.

President Gonzalez is reorganizing the board's structure to reduce the number of committees and institute weekly meetings for each committee. I will become chair of the Land Use Committee and a member of the Finance Committee. I also was named chair of the Plans and Programs Committee of the Transportation Authority, which programs most of the transportation dollars spent in San Francisco.

While this is a heavy workload, these positions will allow me to serve both the Richmond District and the City.

Since his election, I have been asked whether I will support Gonzalez' efforts to extend closure of John F. Kennedy

Drive to automobile traffic on Saturdays. My position on this issue remains the same.

Before I will support any proposal to close JFK on Saturdays, it must include measures to mitigate parking and traffic effects on the surrounding Richmond and Sunset neighborhoods and community groups in those areas must support the plan.

Also, I believe any closure should not impact the ability of institutions within the park to attract visitors. If and when these criteria are met, I would consider supporting such a proposal.

I also have heard from constituents concerned that the Concourse Authority may be removing healthy trees from the concourse. Mike Elzy of the Concourse Authority has assured me that they are not now remov-



Changes in the City, District 1

Jake McGoldrick

ing any trees from the concourse. He indicated that there is a proposal under consideration to remove seven trees from directly in front of the music bandshell in order to create an unobstructed viewing and seating area in front. In addition, about 85 new trees would be planted to fill in the tree canopy in this area.

I am eager to hear what you think about this plan, which would seem to significantly enhance the number of trees in the area. There will be numerous public meetings where you can give your input before any such proposal could be adopted or go into effect.

I am happy to report that the SF Department of Parking and

Traffic has responded favorably to a request from my office to put in a stop sign at the intersection of 33rd Avenue and Clement Street.

This request was brought to my office by neighbors and parents in the area concerned about the safety of their children crossing the street there. Due to the close proximity to a school, we were able to expedite this matter to a successful conclusion.

Finally, I want to report that the board recently passed a resolution that I sponsored that prevents City employees from cooperating with certain provisions of the USA Patriot Act, recently enacted by the federal government. Numerous provisions of the law violate basic tenets of our constitutional liberties, such as freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom from

unreasonable search and seizure and privacy. This law would force librarians to disclose books read by patrons, force Internet service providers to disclose the sites visited by computer users, and collect information on purchases made by credit card.

The feds can demand such information without any showing of necessity and those who provide the information are forbidden from disclosing that they have complied with such a demand. This law violates the federal and state constitutions every elected official swears to uphold when they take office. I therefore felt compelled by my oath to act. San Francisco joins a growing list of localities that refuse to cooperate with this dismantling of our basic political freedoms. In my view, it is not necessary to destroy what our country holds most dear in order to save it from terror.

Jake McGoldrick is a San Francisco supervisor.

The hunger consequences of a war with Iraq

Rev. John Anderson

There is a frail two-year-old slowly dying of dehydration in a Basra hospital while his mother sits next to him, helpless to stop the ravages of diarrhea and infection. He is, according to the World Health Agency, one of the 5,000 Iraqi children who die of water-borne diseases and malnutrition each month.

The young boy is dying because the U.S. systematically targeted water-purification plants and electrical generators in the 1991 Gulf War.

According to Col. John Warden, deputy director of strategy, doctrine and plans for the U.S. Air Force, the purpose of the attacks was "to accelerate the effects of (economic) sanctions" and increase "long-term leverage."

The bombing knocked out almost 97 percent of the country's electrical capacity, a disaster in a highly mechanized and electricity dependent society like Iraq. In the first eight months following the war, 47,000 children died of diseases like cholera, typhoid

and gastroenteritis. More than a half million have followed them in the past decade, and infant mortality has tripled. (From Conn Hallinan, foreign policy analyst and provost at UCSC.)

Of course we are already at war with Iraq, but it appears that it surely will escalate. Whatever we think or feel about this war, or any war, is inconsequential to the children of Iraq, who will be the first to suffer. Malnutrition is spreading due to the massive deterioration of the basic infrastructures, particularly in the water supply and disposal systems. It will get worse as more fighting begins.

The public is welcome to attend a special Prayers for the Children of Iraq, on Friday, Feb. 28, from 7 p.m. to 8 pm, in the sanctuary at St. John's Presbyterian Church, 25 Lake St. This is open to all persons, regardless of tradition or faith.

For more information, call (415) 715-1626.

Rev. John Anderson is pastor at St. John's Presbyterian Church.



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ChoiceCare offers options for live-in seniors

by Jonathan Farrell

By the year 2030 the population of people over the age of 65 will be about 69.4 million – one out of every six people.

That is a fact not overlooked by Regina Khurin, who began an outreach service called ChoiceCare, Inc. to help seniors care for themselves and remain in their own homes as long as possible.

Working from her office in the Sunset District, the Bay Area native talked about the issues confronting seniors why they are vital to society.

"I feel very strongly about helping seniors," she said. "It is important to give back to them because they gave so much to us."

"When seniors live independently in their own home, their quality of life and longevity increases," Khurin said.

She says the focus of her work is "to help seniors stay in their homes and ease the strain of family members who become primary caregivers."

Khurin said an estimated seven million caregivers (mostly women) are working without pay in the home. They struggle to cope with exhaustion and fatigue and a feeling of loneliness because of their situation.

By providing services through ChoiceCare, Inc., Khurin has tried to provide an affordable solution for family members faced with the need for a caregiver in the home.

From her years of experience, Khurin has noticed that many elderly of the Depression/World War II era do not like to admit they need help.

Among that generation, "people are not accustomed to talking about family needs to outsiders," Khurin said. "They were raised with a very strong sense of frugality and self-reliance."

ChoiceCare, Inc. services are designed for individual seniors or elderly couples who need help with daily activities and non-medical needs. This includes cooking, light housekeeping, errand running and personal care needs, such as grooming, dressing and bathing.

With medical needs, such as



Photo: Maureen McGettigan

Director Regina Khurin and her assistant Elizabeth Khmelnitsky hold a sign showing ChoiceCare services.

an in-home nurse, ChoiceCare would be able to help.

"We would most certainly help the person or family as their needs change by providing information and referrals," Khurin said.

Khurin, who is pursuing a Masters Degree in Gerontology from San Francisco State University, understands the importance of advocacy.

"Care for the elderly has become a major concern in society today. It replaces child care as the number one issue for men and women in the work force."

Steve Everhart, founder and CEO of The Seniors Choice Network (of which Khurin is a member), agreed.

"One out of every four households today cares for a senior," Everhart said.

"Already people are spending more time caring or providing care for their elderly parents and grandparents as they do for their own children," Khurin said.

The present number of centenarians (people more than 100 years old) in the United States is about 50,000, the fastest growing segment of the population. The second fastest growing segment is the age group of people

85 and older.

For Khurin these statistics are crucial because as the country's population gets older the demand for quality care will continue to grow.

"I am here as a reliable service provider and resource. I want to expand along the Peninsula, bringing ChoiceCare to the Silicon Valley area."

When a family or senior is ready to begin service, Khurin meets (one on one) with the person and their family. She evaluates what is needed and works to match the need with the right help available.

"Entering a family situation from the outside, one can see what is needed a little more clearly," Khurin said. "Families often don't know what is available."

Citing various financial concerns, she says there are alterna-

tives to nursing homes and "families need to know what is available," she said.

"What I look for in a person as a care provider is a someone who is patient with elders and who has a big heart. It is very easy to tell early on who is doing this work just for the money," she said.

Khurin says she tries to match caregivers to seniors depending on the needs of a particular senior. If an elderly client needs lifting, a strong person is required. But often the senior's needs are basic. They need companionship and help running errands and preparing meals.

"The people I hire have had an extensive background check, evaluation and thorough screening. ChoiceCare handles all the

administrative related concerns, such as payroll, insurance and taxes.

"It's difficult watching a parent or grandparent decline. When they are no longer the person that was at the center of family life and full of vitality, that is sad," said Khurin. The anxiety and sadness, which does occur, adds more stress to the situation of caring for the elderly.

Services can be arranged through ChoiceCare for as little as three hours a day or as many as 24 hours. Short-term and long-term assistance is available, seven days a week, including holidays. For more information, including costs for various services, contact Khurin at (415) 665-2010.

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Research center stirs debate

Continued from page 1

dard in the neighborhood. Sheila Cullen, director of the VA Medical Center, declined to comment on specific items on the list of demands, but she issued a statement through her spokesperson.

"If we receive a list of demands from our neighborhood coalition it will be given a serious review," Cullen said.

Cullen said the VA has held quarterly meetings about the new research center to get the neighbors' input and will continue to do so in the future. She also said the VA is in the process of developing a master plan and a traffic study is underway. She encouraged the public to access the preliminary report on historic preservation at the VA's website at [www.NCIRE.org](#).

Political Support for Neighbors Builds

Neighbors say they are concerned that the VA will, once again, move forward with the project and ignore mitigation measures the community is asking for.

To make sure this does not happen, neighbors say they want the VA to commit, in writing, to complete critical studies and implement the other measures now.

Political support for the neighbors' position seems to be building, with Supervisor Jake

McGoldrick, whose district includes the VA site, throwing his support to the neighbors.

"These concerns are legitimate concerns by the neighbors and they have to be addressed. If the VA doesn't, I will oppose the new research center. I hope it doesn't come to that," McGoldrick said.

Calls to Rep. Nancy Pelosi's office were not returned, but a spokesperson indicated in an interview that Pelosi was aware of the neighbors' concerns.

New \$48 Million Research Center Triggers Latest Dispute

The latest dispute was triggered almost two years ago when the community learned that the VA wanted to build the large research facility on a three-acre parcel in the northwest corner of its Fort Miley campus. The 29-acre VA site is bordered on three sides by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area with its entrance fronting the Seal Rock neighborhood at the end of Clement Street.

Nancy Horner, chief of planning for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), said at the Jan. 8 meeting that she has concerns about parking, traffic and historic preservation. Horner said her agency would monitor the project closely to evaluate how it might impact the experience of visitors

coming to the Ft. Miley land. "(The new facility) sits in a very sensitive area. We will continue to monitor it. We have concerns," Horner told the VA.

The new \$48 million research center is a joint venture with the Northern California Institute for Research and Education (NCIRE), a nonprofit medical research institute that would provide funding for the project.

Paul Volberding, M.D., chief of medical services at the VA and former member of the SF Health Department, told neighbors at the January meeting that having a modern research center is necessary to attract and keep the best faculty. At the meeting neighbors said they are not against the new center, but they want to make sure the VA takes the appropriate steps before it designs and builds the facility.

Because a history of mistrust has built up between the VA and the community, many residents now look upon the VA as a big federal agency that is insensitive to the needs and concerns of the neighborhood.

"There is a real fear of encroachment on the part of the VA by the neighborhood and the national park," said Amy Meyer, a Sunset District resident and vice chairman of the Advisory Commission for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Budget cuts at Rec. and Park

Continued from page 1

feedback from residents before presenting a draft of its budget for 2003-2004 to the Recreation and Park Commission on Feb. 10.

The Park, Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee (PROSAC), a citizen watchdog group established to make sure the department spends bond funds appropriately, hosted a meeting Jan. 27 at the Sunset Recreation Center, with the blessing of the department, to break the bad news to Richmond and Sunset residents and to get their input. The Recreation and Park Department will hold its own meeting at the recreation center Feb. 3, at 6 p.m.

Frank Mancini, a member of PROSAC, told about 40 residents who attended the meeting he was preparing them so they could give feedback to the department about the budget cuts.

"This is to give you a heads up. This is a primer for you. We decided to give you a preview of what to expect so you can absorb the information and provide feedback to the department," he said.

Attendees were asked to participate in an exercise to decide which programs and facilities they wanted the department to keep and which could be managed by other public or private agencies. Some of their priorities included neighborhood parks, pools, Conservatory of Flowers,

Randall Museum and Palace of Fine Arts.

Attendees told the department to consider other options for the stadium at Candlestick Point, food services, the youth golf program, stables, photo center, Latch Key Program and about 40 other programs and facilities under the department's purview.

Most Sunset and Richmond residents who came to the meeting said they were not surprised by the gravity of the budgetary situation.

"I came here tonight expecting to hear the worst. And I heard it," said Sunset resident Cathy Russo.

Blotter

Continued from page 5

theft and alerted a security guard, who stopped the suspect outside the store. The suspect pushed the employee, dropped the stolen merchandise and took off running.

The store employee and security guard chased the 35-year-old suspect down and managed to handcuff him, despite the suspect fighting to get away.

When officers arrived they took the suspect into custody and transported him to Richmond Station for booking. A records search revealed the suspect had been previously convicted of two felonies and a misdemeanor.

Commercial Robbery: Dec. 26, 2002, 5:45 p.m., 3400 Block of Geary Boulevard

A store employee was approached by the suspect, who said, "I have a gun. Give me the money."

The employee said she could not open the register. The suspect tried to open it, to no avail.

A witness saw the suspect run into a garage and not come out. A search of the area turned up the suspect - he was booked.

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I have spent the last few months attending various economic conferences to catch up on what the leading economists are forecasting about the real estate industry. The foremost topic on everyone's mind is whether or not we have a real estate bubble and whether or not real estate prices will tumble like the stock market.

We all know that the general economy has not been doing too well. The unemployment rate is about six percent, a fairly high number by historical standards. It seems like major companies are announcing massive layoffs each and every quarter, which affects everyone, because even if they do not get laid off now, there is no guarantee that it will not happen in the next round.

We appeared to be coming out of the recession last year, but toward the end of the year we slipped back into one. Currently, we are facing the possibility of a war with Iraq, which can influence our economy and markets.

The feds have reduced interest rates a total of 12 times and have succeeded in slowing down the recession, but not eliminating it. In the past, economists thought that the raising and lowering of interest rates were all that was needed to insure a growing economy without inflation and deflation.

This theory has been proven wrong both in Japan, where the interest rate has been hovering around zero for the past 10 years and the Japanese economy has gone nowhere, and the U.S., where, even with low interest rates, our economy has not improved much. Adjusting our monetary policy had some effect, but not enough.

President George Bush has tried to stimulate the economy by adjusting our fiscal policy by passing a tax cut the first year he was in office. It helped, but did not totally eliminate our recession. Currently, he is working on another tax plan that will put more money in our pockets. However, because our state is

Letter to the editor

Editor:
I am doing research on W.P.A. construction projects done in San Francisco and am interested in speaking with anyone who either worked on those projects or knows of someone who did. Please call (415) 681-6665.
Timothy Keegan



Real estate economic forecast

John M. Lee

facing such a large deficit, Governor Gray Davis is proposing an increase in state taxes. Unfortunately, what we will get back at the federal level will be taken away at the state level.

How will our economy influence the real estate market? It seems like we have been insulated from the rest of the economic world. Our real estate prices are still way up there and our number of sales increased by about 20-25 percent last year. Will there be a correction like the stock market?

There is actually another industry that also has done extremely well despite our economy. And that is auto sales, also a rather large consumer purchase. What both real estate and the auto industry have in common are low interest rates. With rates at 40 year lows, consumers are finding it very attractive to take advantage of the situation while they last, leading to more real estate and auto sales.

Economists, however, do not believe there is a real estate bubble and cite a number of reasons why. The buyer's psychology is that real estate always goes up in the long term and history has proven that to be correct time and time again. You cannot lose money if you hold onto San Francisco real estate over any 10-year period. You can acquire property and use maximum leverage, which means you can take 100 percent of the property's

appreciation while investing only 10 percent of the equity. Buyers are more rational; they have not driven up housing prices as much as stock prices before the stock bubble burst.

On the macroeconomic side, there is still a net migration into California. The demographic data suggests that the babies of the baby boomers are approaching their home-buying years, leading to a greater demand than supply. Building permits are also up, meaning the construction industry believes that housing will still be in demand a few years from now.

All these signs suggest that there is no real estate bubble. Even our Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan testified before Congress, "We have looked at the bubble question and we've concluded that it's most unlikely." He said the driving forces behind continuing strong home price appreciation are low interest rates, scarce buildable land and strong demand fueled by immigration. His thoughts are in line with those of other leading economists.

The good news is that we are looking at a pretty strong 2003 in the real estate market in term of activity. Pricewise, we will be looking at only a modest increase because our property prices are already high. But that scenario is much better than a real estate bubble.

John M. Lee is one of the top-selling agents at Pacific Union. If you have any real estate questions, call him at (415) 447-6231 or e-mail him at johnlee@isellsf.com.

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1815 Lake St.	2	1.50	1,700	875,000
518 Funston Ave.	4	2.50	2,650	1,144,850
575 Laurel St.	3	3.50	1,640	1,226,000
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* Partial listing of homes sold in the Richmond District. Source: M.L.S.



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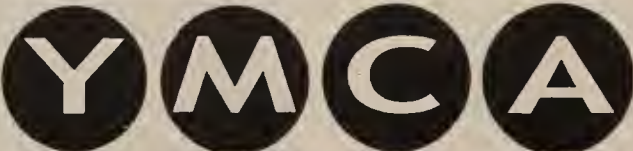
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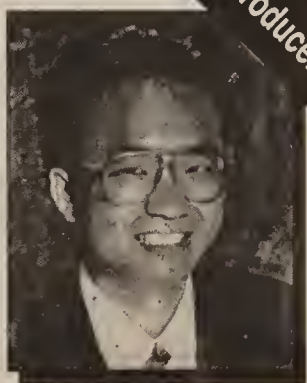
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February Calendar of Events

1 – 9

Dance Exhibition: The University of San Francisco sponsors a photographic and mixed-media exhibit featuring the history of dance in the Golden State, USF, 2130 Fulton St., Thacher Gallery, through Feb. 23, free. For more information, call 422-5178.

Budget Workshop: The SF Recreation and Park Department holds a workshop concerning the department's upcoming budget cutbacks, Sunset Recreation Center, 28th Avenue and Lawton Street, Monday, Feb. 3, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 831-2782.

Evening Run and Walk: Sponsored by Safety Awareness for Everyone (SAFE), free safety strobe, T-shirt and snacks for those who complete the Golden Gate Park run/walk, starts at the Frederick Street entrance to Kezar Stadium, Wednesday, Feb. 5, 7 p.m., free. For more information, call Alexa at 553-1984.

PTA's Annual Dinner: Honoring PTA presidents and school principals, Golden Gateway Holiday Inn, Emerald Room, 1500 Van Ness Ave., Friday, Feb. 7, 6:30 p.m., \$40 for PTA members (\$45 non-PTA). For more information, call 731-6522.

Plant Sale: The Strybing Arboretum Society presents a plant sale featuring Winter-blooming plants and rose pruning demonstrations, Strybing Arboretum, Golden Gate Park, Seventh Avenue and Lincoln Way, Saturday, Feb. 8, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, call 661-1316.

Managing Osteoarthritis: St. Luke's Hospital sponsors a free class with tips for daily living, pre-registration required, St. Luke's Hospital, Solarium Room, 3555 Cesar Chavez St., Saturday, Feb. 8, 10:30 a.m. to noon. For more information, call 641-6465.

Lecture on Feminism: The Older Women's League features Dr. Micheline Kissack who will give an illustrated lecture on "Feminism in Contemporary Art, UCSF Conference Center,

Chancellor's Room, 3333 California St., Sunday, Feb. 9, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., \$9 donation requested. For more information, call Rosemary at 665-0380.

10 – 16

Dinner a la Heart: Local restaurants donate a portion of their proceeds to support the Institute on Aging, numerous restaurant locations in San Francisco, Tuesday, Feb. 11, 7 p.m. For more information, call 750-3443.

Seniors Valentine's Day Dance: The SF Recreation and Park Department sponsors its annual free Valentine's Day dance for seniors with live music and refreshments, Richmond Recreation Center, 251 18th Ave., Wednesday, Feb. 12, 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 666-7079.

Library Community Meeting: An update on the upcoming renovation of the Richmond Branch Library, 351 Ninth Ave., Children's Room, Thursday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m. For more information, call 557-4353 or 557-4354.

Library Artists Meeting: The SF Arts Commission is holding its final public meeting concerning the selection of artists for the Richmond Branch Library renovation, SF Arts Commission, 25 Van Ness Ave., Suite 70, Friday, Feb. 14, 9 a.m. to noon. For more information, call Judy at 252-2595.

Valentine's Day Crafts: Making a card for someone special, for ages three and up, Anza Branch Library, 550 37th Ave., Friday, Feb. 14, 4 p.m. For more information, call 666-7160.

Sutro Heights Park Cleanup: "I Love Sutro Heights Park" workday, bring gloves and good cheer, 48th Avenue and Pt. Lobos Avenue, Saturday, Feb. 15, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, call 556-4256.

Landscape and Garden Design: The basics of creating a sustainable, resource-efficient garden, SF League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG), Seventh Avenue and Lawton Street, Saturday, Feb. 15, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., free. For more information, call 285-7584.

17 – 28

Mayoral Kick-off Party: Supervisor Tom Ammiano invites the public to his campaign for mayor kick-off party, SF Plumber's Hall, 1621 Market St., Wednesday, Feb. 19, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call Larisa at 552-0345.

Black History Celebration: "Remember, Rekindle, Recall: Stories and Songs" with Tureeda Mikell, Presidio Branch Library, 3150 Sacramento St., Thursday, Feb. 20, 10:30 a.m. For more information, call 292-2155.

Town Hall Meeting: Supervisor Jake McGoldrick will host a meeting with representatives from the SF Department of Public Works, SF Department of Traffic and Parking and SF Recreation and Park Department to answer neighborhood queries, Richmond Recreation Center, 251 18th Ave., Saturday, Feb. 22, 10 a.m. to noon. For more information, call Julia at 554-7413.

Police Commission Meeting: The SF Police Commission holds its meeting in the Richmond District, an update on the local crime scene will be given, Richmond Police Station, 461 Sixth Ave., Wednesday, Feb. 26, 6 p.m. For more information, call 666-8000.

Support Group for Parents: A "Parenting Our Teens" support group sponsored by the California Counseling Institute and St. James Episcopal Church will meet to discuss parent-teen relationships, St. James Church, 4620 California St., Wednesdays, Feb. 26, March 5 and March 26, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., \$75 for three sessions. For more information, call 752-1702.

Living with Chronic Conditions: A six-week course about pain management, problem solving, healthy eating, exercise and more, pre-registration required, California Pacific Medical Center, Saturdays from March 1 to April 5, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information or to register, call (800) 366-2624.

Editor's note: The deadline for calendar submissions is the 20th of the month.

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Cliff House to remain open during historic renovation

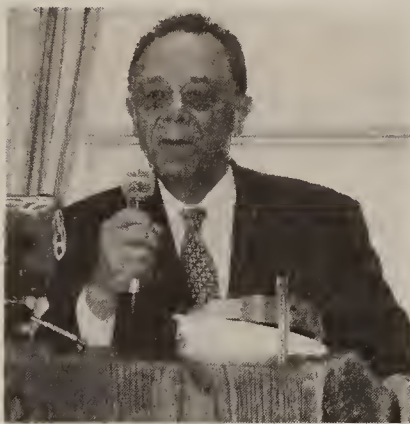
At the groundbreaking ceremony Jan. 23, a new chapter began for the Cliff House as the historic restaurant enters its fourth incarnation.

A sweeping renovation is carefully planned so that the restaurant and gift shop will remain open. The new restaurant space will serve as a bridge between past and present, restoring the character and dignity of the neoclassical structure of 1909 and adding a new wing that draws on architectural elements of the old Sutro Baths. The project, which is estimated at \$14 million, is scheduled for completion in late spring of 2004.

The original Cliff House, a modest structure built in 1863 – and its second, chateau-style incarnation commissioned by San Francisco Mayor Adolph Sutro – were both destroyed by fires. The 1909 structure, built by Sutro's daughter, Dr. Emma Merritt, is what now remains, though it has been obscured by a century of add-ons.

Since the 1850s the area has been used by San Franciscans and visitors in order to experience the scenery and recreational opportunities associated with the shoreline, beach and ocean. Today the area is part of the National Park Service and is administered by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The project's designer is C. David Robinson Architects, in consultation with Preservation Architecture. Debra Lehtone is the project architect.

The renovation will result in two restaurants. The present dining room, in the historic building, will be transformed into a bistro serving shellfish and lighter fare and offering deli takeout, while the new North Sutro Wing will house a dramatic two-story dining room that offers panoramic views of the ocean, entrance to the Sutro Baths, San Francisco Bay and the Marin coastline. The new main restaurant will offer an expanded menu of American-style cuisine with a seafood em-



Courtesy photo

Cliff House proprietor Dan Hountalas at the groundbreaking ceremony.

phasis. The Cliff House Gift Shop will also move to the new wing.

In addition, there will be a new grand entry lobby with a sitting lounge that links the two restaurants, three publicly accessible observation decks and improved parking and traffic flow. The contemporary wing will be built with natural materials to blend in with the scenic coastline. The new building will be lower to the ground and less of a view obstruction to passers-by. The Cliff House's old redwood will be salvaged for reuse.

Dan and Mary Hountalas, proprietors of the Cliff House since 1973, see the renovation as long overdue.

"There's so much history in the Cliff House. We have employees whose parents used to work here. We hope to preserve that history but also infuse it with a sense of vitality for the new Cliff House," Dan Hountalas said.

The Cliff House will hold a public auction Feb. 12 featuring Cliff House artifacts, including kitchen equipment, antiques, flatware, china, tables, chairs and pictures. For more information, call the restaurant at (415) 386-3330.

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